India opposed the inclusion of this item on the agenda of the Board on the grounds that the IAEA, whose mandate is the promotion of peaceful uses of atomic energy is not the appropriate forum to raise such an issue. India also pointed out that in the past Nuclear Weapon States like the U.S., U.K., and China have said that the issue of nuclear testing did not lie within the competence of the Agency.

The issue of nuclear testing was raised in the IAEA Annual General Conference in 1996 when France and China carried out nuclear tests prior to signing the CTBT. India's Peaceful Nuclear Explosion (PNE) was also discussed in 1974 at the IAEA.

Renewal of passports of Indian citizens domiciled abroad

*439. SHRI KARTAR SINGH DUGGAL: Will the PRIME MINISTER be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that renewal of passports of Indian citizens domiciled abroad are not attended to for several months and in some cases even for years;

(b) what is the normal time for giving clearance to the Indian Missions abroad for renewal of the passports in the era of fax, internets and E-mails;

(c) whether it is also a fact that such delays in obtaining clearance have led to corrupt practices; and

(d) whether any enquiry has been made in this regard?

THE MINISTER OF THE STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRIMATI VASUNDHARA RAJE): (a) *No, Sir.

(b) Indian diplomatic missions and posts abroad are empowered to renew passports immediately on receipt of application for the same.

(c) *No, Sir.*

(d) Does not arise.

Damage caused by rains and floods

*440. SHRI BHAGABAN MAJHI: Will the PRIME MINISTER be pleased to state:

(a) the States which are affected by recent rains and floods;

(b) the extent of damage caused to lives and property, including crop in those States; and

(c) the details of the relief and rehabilitation provided to these States, State-wise?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE (SHRI SOMPAL): (a) to (c) According to reports received from the State Governments, some parts of the States of Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, Gujarat, Kerala, Maharashtra, Rajasthan, Sikkim and West Bengal have been affected due to heavy rains, floods, cyclone, landslides in varying degrees during the current South-West Monsoon.

These natural calamities have reportedly claimed a toll of 1388 human lives and damaged 0.94 lakh hectares cropped area and 2.89 lakh houses/huts.

The State Governments are required to undertake relief and rehabilitation measures in the wake of natural calamities out of the corpus of the Calamity Relief Fund (CRF). The contribution to this Fund is made by the Government of India and the State Governments in the ratio of 3:1. The contribution of the Government of India is released in four equal quarterly instalments automatically. Additional assistance, if any, is provided to the State Governments from the National Fund for Calamity Relief (NFR) in the wake of calamities of rare severity according to a prescribed procedure.

The Government of India have released the first two quarterly instalments of Centre's share of CRF for the year 1998-99 to all the States. The amount

released to the affected States are as under:

(Rs. in crore)

State	Centre's share
Arunachal Pradesh	2.43
Assam	20.80
Gujarat	58.06
Kerala	23.04
Maharashtra	28.365
Rajasthan	74.46
Sikkim	1.96
West Bengal	10.67

The States of Gujarat and Sikkim have submitted Memoranda seeking additional assistance from the NFCR in the wake of cyclone and rains/landslides, respectively. Necessary action is being taken as per prescribed procedure.

WRITTEN ANSWERS TO UNSTARRED QUESTIONS

Productivity of cashew in Kerala

3214. SHRI J. CHITHARANJAN: Will the PRIME MINISTER be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government of Kerala has submitted a project for replanting and productivity improvement of cashew in the State; and

(b) what decision has been taken in this regard?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE (SHRI SOMPAL): (a) and (b) During November, 1997 the Government of Kerala submited a project proposal seeking Central Assistance of Rs. 107.10 crores for Replanting and Productivity Improvement of Cashew in Kerala. The project included the components of area expansion, replanting and rejuvenation of old and senile orchards, production and distribution of hybrid varieties of cashew clones, establishment of model gardens, better management of young plantations, training and propaganda, to be implemented in a period of five years during the Ninth Five Year Plan.

Most of the components included in the project proposal submitted by the Government of Kerala like area expansion, replanting/rejuvenation, production and distribution of hybrid varieties through regional nurseries, establishment of model clonal garden and training of farmers are being covered under the ongoing Centrally Sponsored Scheme on 'Integrated Development of Cashew'. A sum of Rs. 119.9 lakhs was released to the Government of Kerala during 1997-98. During 1998-99 an allocation of Rs. 92.02 lakhs has been provided for Kerala state. The other components are not covered under the scheme.

Setting up of a statutory cotton board

3215. SHRI C. RAMACHANDRAIAH: Will the PRIME MINISTER be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government of Andhra Pradesh has suggested the setting up of a Statutory Cotton Board based at Hyderabad;

(b) if so, when was this proposal received by Government and what steps have been taken in this regard; and

(c) the details of status of this proposal?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE (SHRI SOMPAL): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) and (c) The Chief Minister of Andhra Pradesh suggested for setting up of Cotton Board in his letter addressed to Ex-Prime Minister which was received in November, 1997.

The proposal has been examined in this Ministry and this Ministry does not support the proposal for establishment of Cotton Board.